

Socio Barriers to Women Political Participation in Kohat, Pakistan

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Abstract

The present study aims to explore association of the social barriers with political affiliation of women in district Kohat. A sample size of 100 household is selected through purposive sampling from four sectors in KDA Kohat where, 25 respondents are selected from each sector. Questionnaire is used as a tool of data collection. The data is analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). A relationship between independent variable i.e. social barriers is measured through dependent variable i.e. political affiliation of the respondents. Findings of the research indicate that male attitude towards female political participation is negative and our society and culture does not allow female to participate normally in politics like males, many factors which we mention in our research like lack of confidence, male dominant society, lack of education, unawareness, no specific female political party, domestic work burden are responsible for not allowing women to participate in political process in the country. A significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship between lack of confidence in women, support to females from their family, domestic work burden of females, women gender as being female and political affiliation aspect is ascertained.

Keywords: *Politics, Political Participation, women political participation, Social barriers, Kohat, Household*

1. Introduction

The development of a state and foundation of an impartial, well balanced, feasible, strong, and successful social order depends, to maximum degree, on the complete and dynamic contribution of women in the politics and important economic actions of that state, further than the window-dressing of featuring in the trumpet blast at political rallies and other such like programs. Therefore it is, debatable that addressing the issues

neighboring women's participation in community life is means to the appearance of an economically sustainable society (Duke, 2010; Denzer, 1999). Tahri (2003) highlighted that the low representation of female in political activities is the familiar characteristic of many nations of the world. Although it had been debated that women have commonly transformed from dependency upon their husbands to dependency upon the nation and this alter had mostly enhanced their place and status and had given them new possessions for mobilization, protest right, and political authority, testimony of their subordination still remains. In Pakistan, women's participation deficiency in decision-making processes and admittance to authority are serious issues that have been overlooked since decades. Such situations holds for the worthlessness, if not totally ignored, of the concerns of women especially in this region, where women still remains suppressed and fight virtually for everything; from fundamental survival to property ownership. The problem, however in this regard, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is severe in which the present structures of society serve to continue cultural practices that guarantee the suppression and marginalization of women in almost all fields of life.

The level of political involvement of women continues and is badly affected by a numerous environmental factors regardless of the fact that there had been obvious improvements in literacy rate and political awareness among women. The habitual and conventional laws, for example, had always given more influence and control over resources and decision-making processes to the men, which is making most of the systems undemocratic on large scale. This somewhat explains why women's socio-economic and political development remains undersized. The problem for women, at present, is that in spite of the moderate provisions of national constitutions and many state policies, strong inequalities still remains in most societies. Further compounding this problem is the recent sensitive levels of violence and general criminalization of politics in African countries (Gilligan, 1993; Inglehart, 1979).

Despite of the current progress made by women in areas such as education, professions, and employment, the female folk is still remained excluded largely from political, economic, and social life in most societies in the sector. This situation presents contradictions because of its application for women, in particular, and society, as a whole. In Pakistan, women hold nearly half of the total population at 47.97%. According to 1998 Census, the population of the district Kohat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was 562644 persons, where 282844 (50.27%) were male and 279800 (49.73%) were female (Population Census Organization, Pakistan, 1998). Sidelining, in any way whatever, such a significant fraction of the population has far-reaching ramifications for the systemic development of the nation, and on the whole its ability to meet the targets of some important globally subscribed human development such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, as suggested, women's lives, education, and their entry into the professions might break the historic sequence of hostility and dominance (Gilligan, 1993).

Asia, which holds 18.3 percent of female in legislatures, is nearly equivalent to the world average. Asia is an attractive region in terms its experimentation with quotas, providing some of the initial examples in the world. Pakistan implemented reserved seats since 1956, and Bangladesh implemented reservations for women in the 1970's. Today, in the constitution of India quotas exist, and formerly in Bangladesh, and in Pakistan,

Indonesia and China legislated quotas are implemented. This region has exposed an inclination for the provisions of legislated quota rather than leaving it for political parties to implement their own unofficial party quotas, like in Western Europe and parts of Africa. There is also an inclination for quotas to give them the form of reserved seats, which is a popular method of quota implementation in first-past-the-post systems, which tend to dominate in the region (Belington, 2004). In this context, the present study is designed to explore the social barriers to women political participation in one of the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

2. Materials and Methods

The core objective of this research is to know about the socio cultural barriers in women political participation in the Pakhtun rigid patriarchal society of Pakistan. The population of the research is comprised of households and the universe selected is area known as Kohat Development Authority (KDA), Kohat. In sampling, purposive sampling technique is exercised as our focus is on educated men who can easily understand our objectives and give us information's and data without biasness. Four sectors are chosen from KDA with a population of approximately 200 houses having 60 houses in a sector, a sample of 25 houses from all the mentioned sectors are taken and the total number of houses from which data is collected is 100. The data is collected through a comprehensive questionnaire prepared with the help of literature and personal experience. The collected data is analyzed by using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, computer software). The Chi square X^2 is used for measuring association between the dependent and independent variables.

3. Results and Discussions

The bi-variate results derived through the application of chi square test are discussed as follow:

3.1 Relationship of social barriers to women's participation in politics with political affiliation aspect

Table 1 shows the relationship of social barriers to women political participation with political affiliation aspect. In this table, a strongly significant relationship is found between lack of confidence in women and political affiliation aspect. Similarly a significant relationship is found between support to females from their family and their political affiliation, further, a strong significant relationship is found between domestic work burden of females and their affiliation in political parties. And there is a strong significant relationship founded between women gender as being female and their political affiliation whereas a non significant relationship founded in woman's political affiliation and the education level of the females and also a non significant relationship founded between men's social conservatism and the political affiliation of women. As well, from the statistics a non significant relationship is found between the interest of women in politics and their affiliation with political parties.

Anon significant relationship is observed between women experience discrimination in political institutions/parties and their political affiliation. Similarly anon significant relationship is extracted between political life is organized according to male norms and values and women political affiliation. Further, a non significant relationship is found between unawareness of females from political knowledge and then the lack of affiliation in political parties of women. Similarly a very strong significant relationship is found

between political parties’ favoritism towards male candidates and this is creating barrier for women in political affiliation. Similarly anon significant relationship is measured between women feelings of frustration in political setup and their political affiliation. Likewise, a non significant relationship is observed between no specific party for women in politics and women political affiliation.

Table 1: Relationship of Social Barriers in Women’s Participation in Politics with Political Affiliation aspect

Statement	Response	Political affiliation aspect		Total	Statistics
		Yes	NO		
Women participation in politics is less because of lack of confidence	Yes	6 (6%)	66 (66%)	72(72%)	$X^2=19.028(.000)$
	No	12(12%)	14(14%)	26(26%)	
	Don’t know	1(1%)	1(1%)	2(2%)	
Women participation in politics is less because of lesser support from family.	Yes	15(15%)	77(77%)	92(92%)	$X^25.430 (.066)$
	No	3(3%)	3(3%)	6(6%)	
	Don’t know	1(1%)	1(1%)	2(2%)	
Women cannot participate because of domestic work burden	Yes	9(9%)	60(60%)	69(69%)	$X^2=7.377 (.025)$
	No	10(10%)	18(18%)	28(28%)	
	Don’t know	0(0%)	3(3%)	3(3%)	
Women participation in politics is low because of their gender (i.e. being female)	Yes	10(10%)	58(58%)	68(68%)	$X^2=7.448 (.024)$
	No	5(5%)	20(20%)	25(25%)	
	Don’t know	4(4%)	3(3%)	7(7%)	
Women do not participate in politics because most of them are un educated	Yes	12(12%)	45(45%)	57(57%)	$X^2=.724 (.696)$
	No	7(7%)	34(34%)	41(41%)	
	Don’t know	0(0%)	2(2%)	2(2%)	
Men social conservatism obstructs women participation in politics	Yes	12(12%)	52(52%)	64(64%)	$X^2=.478 (.788)$
	No	5(5%)	24(24%)	29(29%)	
	Don’t know	2(2%)	5(5%)	7(7%)	
Women are less interested in politics.	Yes	9(9%)	45(45%)	54(54%)	$X^2=.666 (.717)$
	No	8(8%)	31(31%)	39(39%)	
	Don’t know	2(2%)	5(5%)	7(7%)	

	know				
Women experience discrimination with in political institutions/parties.	Yes	9(9%)	43(43%)	52(52%)	$X^2=.260 (.878)$
	No	7(7%)	28(28%)	35(35%)	
	Don't know	3(3%)	10(10%)	13(13%)	
Political life is organized according to male norms and values	Yes	10(10%)	49(49%)	59(59%)	$X^2=.453 (.797)$
	No	7(7%)	26(26%)	33(33%)	
	Don't know	2(2%)	6(6%)	8(8%)	
Women participation is less in politics because of un awareness.	Yes	17(17%)	51(51%)	68(68%)	$X^2=5.491(.064)$
	No	1(1%)	25(25%)	26(26%)	
	Don't know	1(1%)	5(5%)	6(6%)	
Political parties favor male instead of females.	Yes	6(6%)	48(48%)	54(54%)	$X^2=9.032 (.011)$
	No	13(13%)	26(26%)	39(39%)	
	Don't know	0(0%)	7(7%)	7(7%)	
Political participation is more frustrating for women	Yes	6(6%)	46(46%)	52(52%)	$X^2=4.331(.115)$
	No	11(11%)	27(27%)	38(38%)	
	Don't know	2(2%)	8(8%)	10(10%)	
No specific party for women in politics	Yes	13(13%)	51(51%)	64(64%)	$X^2=.299(.861)$
	No	4(4%)	22(22%)	26(26%)	
	Don't know	2(2%)	8(8%)	10(10%)	

4. Conclusions

This research focuses on socio-cultural barriers in women political participation. The respondent's attitude is measured through questionnaire covering social barriers to women political participation and its relationship with political affiliation of the respondents. From the study findings it could be concluded that within the study area with reference to social barriers, women lack of self confidence is the only major factor that becomes a hurdle in the way of women political participation. However, another noted factor derived through this research work is the burden of domestic chores and tasks on women. In the study area almost every task within home is considered the sole responsibility of the women and men are not actively helping them in these tasks. Therefore, the women folk of the study area are not getting time to participate in a political process. It is also evident from the study findings as well from personal observation that political parties are self centered and looking for seat winners candidates and in the current patriarchal structure, women could not compete with men therefore, this is one of the hurdles in political participation.

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